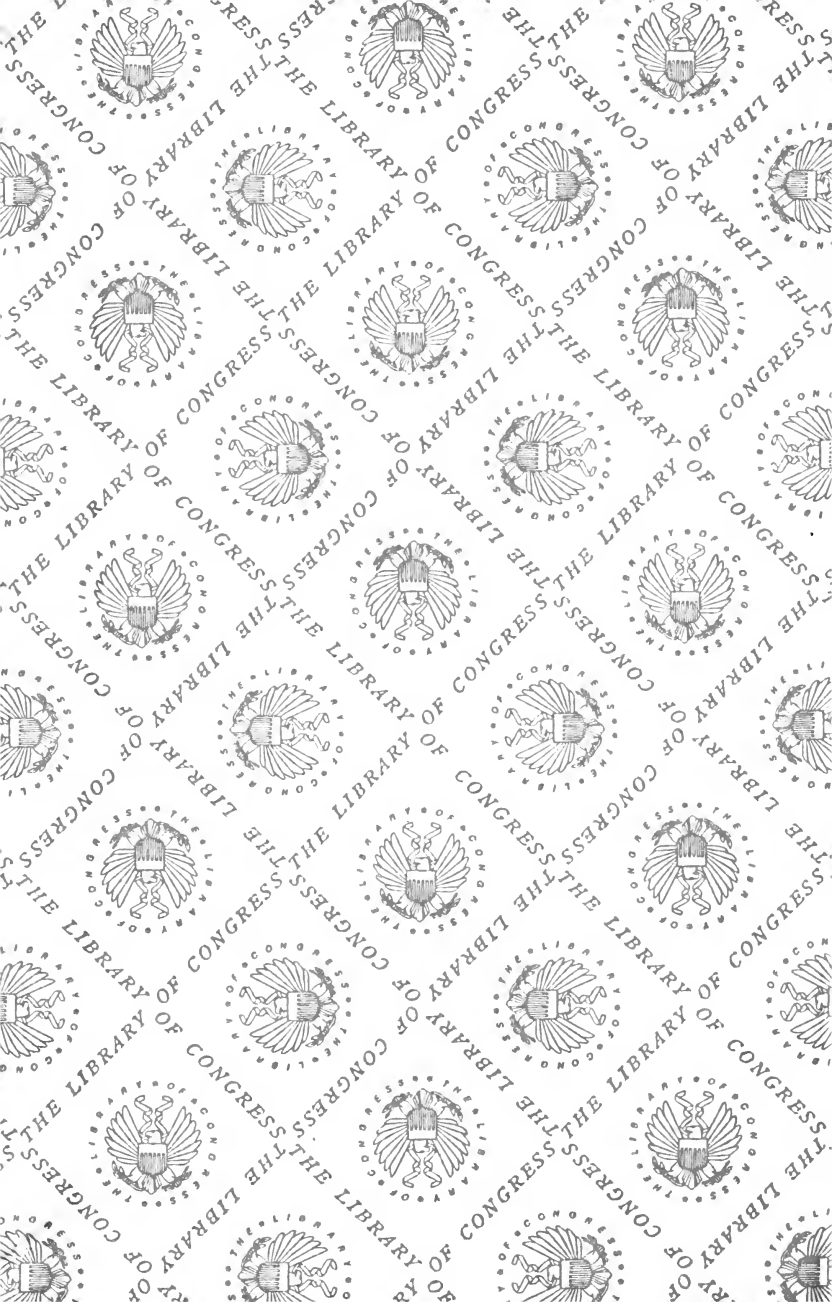
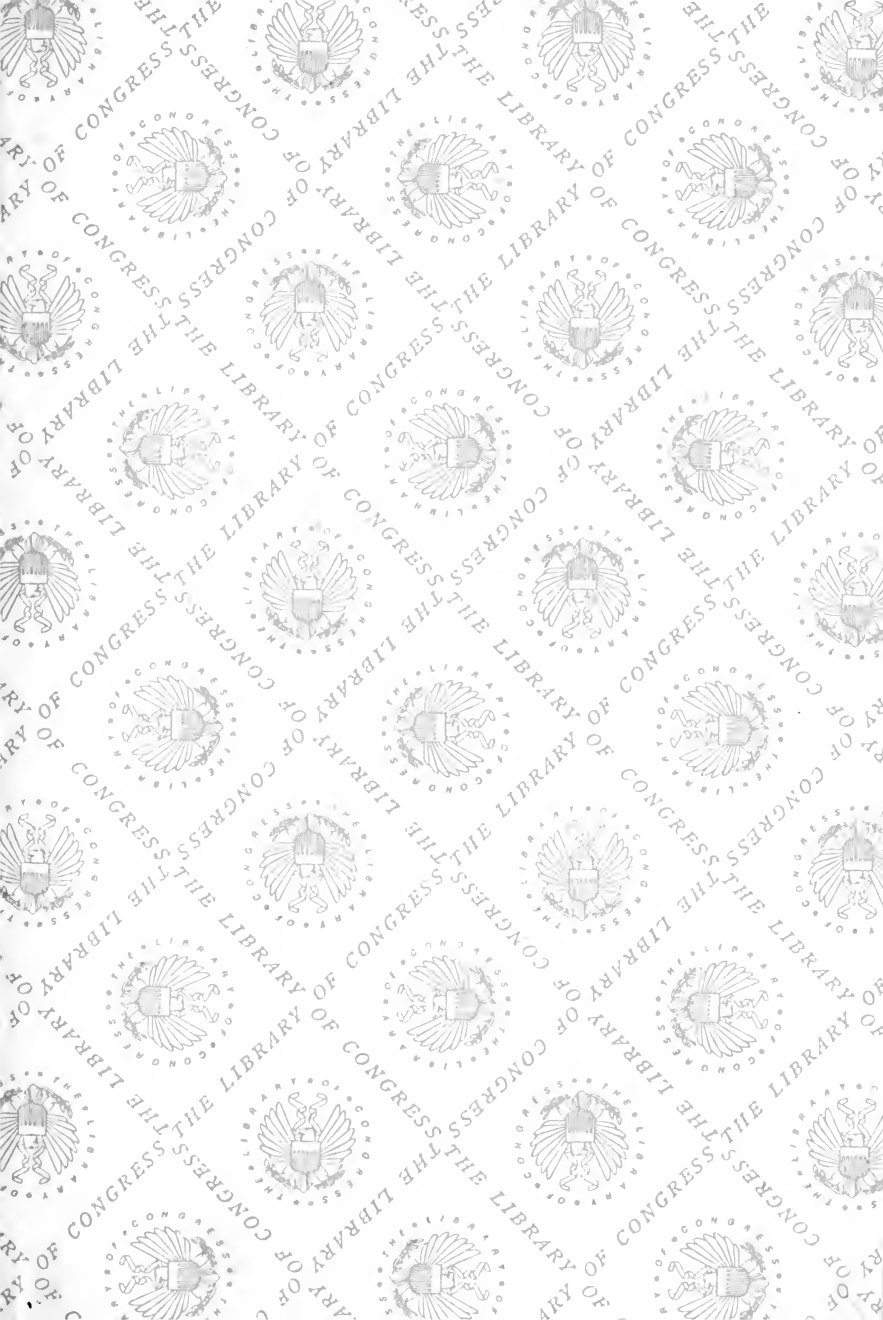


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# Timothy Delano's Courtship

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

BY

MARTHA RUSSELL ORNE

AUTHOR OF "THE COUNTRY SCHOOL," "A BLACK DIAMOND," ETC.

34  
Roorbach

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# TIMOTHY DELANO'S COURTSHIP.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS.

TIMOTHY DELANO, . . . *A rich, but miserly country gentleman of sixty.*  
 AUNT TABITHA, . . . *An eccentric and ambitious old maid of forty-five.*  
 ALICE, . . . . . *Her niece, a young lady about eighteen years of age.*  
 RICK, . . . . . *Alice's brother—at home from college, on a vacation.*  
 HILDEGARDE, . . . . . *Colored maid-of-all-work. About sixteen.*

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—ONE HOUR AND A QUARTER.

## COSTUMES.

TIMOTHY DELANO.—Fine broadcloth suit, too large for him.

AUNT TABITHA.—Red wig with bunched curls on each side of face; spectacles; plain black silk dress with apron. Should make up very homely but neat.

ALICE.—Stylish white dress, etc.

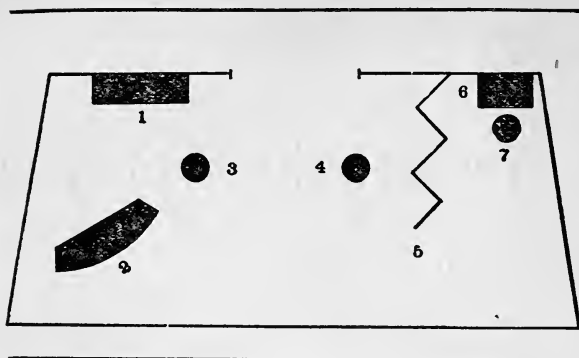
RICK.—Stylish light summer suit, gloves, hat, cane, etc.

HILDEGARDE.—Negro wig tied with various colored rags; long-sleeved tire, patched with different colors; large shoes, out at the toes and down at the heels, etc., etc.

## PROPERTIES.

Writing materials on table. Fan for AUNT TABITHA. Broom, brush, duster, etc., for HILDEGARDE. Watch for RICK. Snuff-box, large bandanna handkerchief and some peppermint drops for TIMOTHY.

## STAGE SETTING.



SCENE.—A parlor with centre-door in the flat, backed with a screen or hall backing. If the door is not practicable, hang a curtain over the opening. 1. Piano, with mirror hanging over it, up R. 2. Sofa, down R. 3 and 4. chairs R. C. and L. C. 5. Screen extending down the stage from a point in the flat midway between the door and the L. side. 6. Writing table. 7. Chair.

## STAGE DIRECTIONS.

In observing, the actor faces the audience. R., means right; L., left; C., centre; R. C., right of centre; L. C., left of centre; UP STAGE, toward the back; DOWN STAGE, toward the audience.

R.

R. C.

C.

L. C.

L.





# TIMOTHY DELANO'S COURTSHIP.

## ACT I.

Scene.—*Parlor, set as per diagram of stage setting. As the curtain rises, RICK is discovered at the table, writing.*

Enter AUNT TABITHA, followed by ALICE.

Aunt Tab. Alice, I shall feel very much disapprobated, if you do not receive Mr. Delano as you should. (*sits R. C. and fans herself*) It ain't every gall as has an oppertoonty to make herself mistress of Fern Ledge with five thousand a year thrown in free *gratis* fer nothing. I hev taken care of you and your brother ever since you was four years old, and you certainly owe it ter me to respect my wishes in this perticler. It has allus been my crowning desire ter see you married out of the trials and troubles of this world, and now this oppertoonty has come, *I* don't intend ter let it slip out er my fingers! I insist on your meeting Mr. Delano, and giving him a *siesta*.

Alice. (L. C.) You mean a *tête-à-tête*, aunt, I presume; a siesta is an after-dinner nap.

Aunt Tab. Wall, I mean that you're to receive him and give him a favorable answer to his suit—that's what I mean—and he'll be here this afternoon!

Rick. (*turns; aside*) Whew, the deuce!

[*Listens.*]

Alice. (*in surprise*) This afternoon, aunt Tabitha!

Aunt Tab. That's what I said. I've jest received a billy dux from him, in which he requests a half hour's intermission with me and—

Alice. Oh, with *you*? He says nothing about *me* then! (*sarcastically*) Why do you think, aunt, that this *honor* is designed for me?

Aunt Tab. You disremember, child, that Mr. Delano's sister is my dearest friend—yes my buzzom friend for years. Yesterday

afternoon she druv down here emphatically to prepare me for this note, and to explain how matters stood.

Alice. (*scornfully*) Her worthy brother having sent her, I suppose!

Aunt Tab. You are mistaken, my dear niece. On the contrary, her revered and respected brother had no inclination of the matter. Nor did he even know of her visit to us. Of course they have probably talked so important a subject over in the family—I don't know how else she could have found out about it—but she was so delighted with the retrospect of having you for a sister-in-law that—

Alice. Sister-in-law! Aunt, what are you thinking of? What do you think my dear mother and father would say to such mockery as this, if they were living! Mr. Delano is old enough to be my grand-father! What do you mean by asking me to marry such a man—a decrepit, superannuated, snuff-taking old miser, too mean to go to church for fear he will be asked to contribute something! I despise him!

Rick. (*aside*) Good! Give it to the old dotard!

Aunt Tab. I am shocked to hear you call a gentleman by such epitaphs. (Rick *laughs in pantomime*) But you don't stop to think of the *money*; think of it—five thousand dollars a year at the least! (*pathetically*) I have toiled by the sweat of my brow, and slaved for you and Rick a good many years, and have made a great many sacrileges that you know not of; and think of the luxuries with which you can environ my reclining years when you become Mr. Delano's wife.

Rick. (*aside, with a groan*) Delightful anticipation! She'll want me to marry that old hag, his sister, next, in order to get the other five thousand a year, I suppose.

Alice. Aunt, as long as Rick and I live you shall never suffer want. You know that each of us has a small property, and when Rick gets through college we can have many luxuries that we are now deprived of. I am sure, aunt, if there is anything you are in need of, Rick and I will deny ourselves a great deal in order to get it for you. He is at home from college now and we will see to it this very day.

Aunt Tab. (*with dignity*) I wasn't complaining, child, but it is high time you were thinking of matrimony; and a second offer like this you can't expect.

Rick. (*aside*) And don't want!

Alice. (*impatiently*) But, aunt, I don't care for this man. I don't love him and I don't intend to!

Rick. (*aside*) Stick to it! By Jove—I didn't know my little sister was such a brick!

Aunt Tab. Love—fiddlesticks! What has love to do with it? I never loved anybody in my life——

Rick. (*aside*) Lucky for them you didn't!

Aunt Tab. (*continuing*)—and it's all continental nonsense—I mean it's all sentimental nonsense.

Rick. (*aside*) Nobody ever cared a continental, I reckon! I'd as soon think of embracing a refrigerator.

Alice. There is no use in talking to me in this way, aunt. In all my life, I have never opposed you, but have tried to be dutiful——

Rick. (*aside*) That's just the trouble. The old dragon wouldn't try it on me!

Alice. But a woman should never marry a man she does not love.

Aunt Tab. (*with dignity*) I shall converse with you no longer on this subject which is nearest ter my heart, but my mind is made up—fully made up ter this allegiance, and marry him you shall!

[*Sweeps out of the room with head in the air.*]

Alice. (*thoughtfully*) And she means every word she says. (*rises and walks floor*)

Rick (*aside*) Whether it's the *right* one or not!

Alice. Aunt Tabitha is unflinching when she makes up her mind, and she will pursue her course to the bitter end. It makes me shudder to think of it. What can I do? (*wrings hands and wipes eyes with her handkerchief*) What *shall* I do? If I should refuse this old man whom I never met more than half a dozen times in my life, aunt Tabitha would make poor Rick's life and mine a burden to us—or worse, she would pack up her goods and leave——

Rick. (*approaching from behind the screen*) Which would be the very best thing she could do for us, little sister.

Alice. O, Rick, how you startled me! Have you been there all the time?

Rick. (C.) Well, if "all the time" is since you and our dear, sweet aunt have been conversing together, I have.

Alice. (*up R. C.*) Then Rick what can I do? What *shall* I do?

Rick. (*pacing floor, with hands in pockets*) Do? Do nothing! Of course you are not going to marry an old fossil like Delano. I'd like to know what the old blockheaded simpleton, the old ninny-hammer, with his mincing gait and prating cackle, is thinking of to ask anybody to marry him!

Alice. But aunt Tabitha, Rick? It isn't safe to oppose her, you know. If she should leave us, and it would be just like her, every gossip in the town would have an original version of the cause, and it would be so unpleasant—so embarrassing for us, you know.

Rick. Well, we could give out that she'd gone to Long Branch, or the Mountains, for her health, or to rest—to give us a rest I mean—or to visit some rich relations, or——

Alice. Yes, but don't imagine that aunt would leave quietly—anything but that! She would make us out the worst of sinners——

Rick. I can stand that. Go on.

Alice. (*seated*) Call us undutiful ingrates——

Rick. Ha, ha, ha! Pretty good; seems to me I've heard that expression before, with some variations.

Alice. (*resuming*) Who had turned her out of house and home after she had worked so hard to bring us up, and had served us so many years. Think what a pathetic story she could make of it. An old lady like her actually turned out of doors by an ungrateful nephew and niece. (*RICK walks floor with hands behind him*)

Rick. (*suddenly*) Eureka!—I have it, by Jove! (*rubbing hands together*) Ah! leave it to my manly intellect to devise a means of escape—to rescue you from the toils of this she-dragon and this *allegiance* as she calls it. Now let's see how we shall proceed. (*thoughtfully*) I think we had better take Hildegarde into our confidence—Yes, that's the best plan—she can help us if any one can, for she hates Delano like the toothache, and what she doesn't succeed in doing we must. Where is Hildegarde, I wonder?

Alice. She was in the next room a few minutes ago; I heard her singing—but what are you going to do, Rick? Since I am the one most interested, it might be well to take me into your confidence too.

Rick. You leave it to me. (*calls*) Hildegarde! Hildegarde! Here she comes. Now, Alice, you must follow me implicitly. I've got you out of a good many scrapes before this, you know.

Alice. (*laughing*) And into them, too. But I'll let by-gones be by-gones, Rick, if you'll only help me this time.

Enter HILDEGARDE, carrying duster.

Hilde. Did yo' want me, sah?

Rick. Yes, I do. I want to talk with you a moment, Hildegarde.

Hilde. (*up C.*) Lud-a-mussy ter gracious! What's I done now? (*looking anxiously from one to the other*) I isn't done nuffin, hones' an' true I isn't!

Rick. Now see here, Hildegarde, just listen to me a minute. Do you want a new dress? (*she bobs her head and smiles*) A bright new one, with the waist cut on the bias, and double-breasted side plaits, and shirred in Queen Anne style, with angel sleeves, and Elizabethan fluting on the panniers?

Hilde. (*holding up both hands in astonishment*) De Lud-a-mussy ! Is yer gwine inter de bizness yerse'f, Mars' Rick—dat soun's like an adver-tise-ment,—or is yer gwine ter send ter Londin fer it ? Dey ain't no sech fine t'ings as dem made roun' heah. I's fraid I'd git lost in dat ar dress.

Rick. But you want it, don't you, Hildegarde ?

Hilde. (*slyly winking at ALICE*) Dat depen's on what I's got ter do fer it. I don' kyar ter drap no mo' lobes er bread down Widder Jones' chimbly an' get mah han's an' face all bracked up ; an' I don' kyar ter be let down de well again in de watah-bucket an' get mos' drowned ; an' I don'——

Rick. (*laughing*) No, it's nothing of that sort this time, Hildegarde. It's a good deed of charity that I want you to do this time, and you shall be amply rewarded if you do your part well.

Hilde. Dat's what yo' allus say, Mars' Rick. "It's a deed ob charity," but dey don' gib me none ob de charity when I's done gone an' did de wuk. No, dey don't ! Now dar's de Widder Jones ; she went roun' an' tole eberybody dat one night she was a prayin' fur somethin' ter eat, an' de Lawd hear her pray'r an' sent a loaf ob bread a-tumblin' down de chimbly dat nearly scairt her senses outen her,—what little she's got—an' one day, 'cause I's afraid ter hab her tell so many lies 'bout it, I tole her dat I guess de Lawd didn't hab much to do wid dat loaf ob bread, fur I trowed it down dar mahse'f, an' she said dat anyhow de Lawd sent it ef de debil did brung it, an' dat's all de t'anks I got. 'Taint berry consolin' ter be tole dat yo' 'sembles dat individual. Den de day yo' sent me down de well——

Rick. That's all right, Hildegarde : but this work I want you to do is different——

Hilde. (*in mock despair*) Mo' wuk ! De Lud a mussy ! How's I gwine ter do mo' wuk 'n I do now, I'd like ter know ?

Rick. There, there, Hildegarde, just listen to me, and you'll understand. Now don't interrupt till I get through. You know old Delano, don't you, who lives at Fern Ledge ?

Hilde. Dat ole mooncalf wot goes roun' wid his elbows out so (*imitates*) an' dresses in de brack shiny cloth ?

Rick. (*laughing*) Yes, broadcloth.

Hilde. An' wears clocs too big fer him, so's ter get his money's wuf outen de tailor ?—Yes, I knows all 'bout him. He's de one wot axes all dem questions 'bout Miss Alice. (*RICK and ALICE start and exchange glances*)

Rick. Oh, he does, does he ? I'd like to kick him ! And what does he say ?

Hilde. He wanter know did Miss Alice hab any beaux ; an'——

Rick. And what did you say to that ?

Hilde. (*rolling her eyes and holding up her hands*) I said, de holy day ob Jubilee, dey's a hundred ob dem, an' dey's a hangin' roun' heah all de time!

Rick. (*laughing and rubbing hands together*) Good!

Alice. Why, Hildegarde, how could you tell such a wrong story! I never had a beau in my life.

Hilde. 'Cos he's no bizness ter arsk sech a impendent question. But dat ain't all, fer den he arsk me did she *like* any ob 'em; an' I tole him I reckon she did mighty well by de way she larfed an' torked to 'em. An' he arsked me did she like any *one* on 'em better'n she did de oders, an' I tole him, Oh, yes she likes dem *all* better'n she did de oders, heaps better, an'—(*RICK and ALICE interrupt with laughter*)

Rick. You're a rich one, Hildegarde! ha, ha, ha! and what did he say to that?

Hilde. He didn't *say* nuffin: but he looked kin' ob discouraged like. Den I said, wot yer gwine to gib me fer all dis infermashun? Ah' he put his han' in his pocket an' handed out—a *peppermint*! One peppermint fer all dat brain wuk!

Rick. Unbounded generosity! Now Hildegarde, what if I should tell you that this old skinflint wants to marry Miss Alice and is determined to have her in spite of the fact that she detests him.

Hilde. (*raising both hands in surprise*) De ho—ly—Lud-a-mussy!!

Rick. Of course we don't want her to be sacrificed in any such way, neither do we desire—if we can help it—to offend Aunt Tabitha who has set her heart on this match; so we're going to place a great deal of confidence in you, Hildegarde, and rely on you to help us out of it.

Hilde. Yes, sah—he, he, he! (*dances round the room*)

Rick. He will be here this afternoon and Aunt Tabitha will probably show him into this room. As soon as she leaves, to find Alice, I want you to make some good excuse for putting him behind that screen there. (*pointing*) By the way, I guess you'd better be around when he comes, and show him in here yourself. Yes, stand out by the gate if necessary, and take him in, for she might find it her duty to come back with Alice and that would spoil everything. I've got a grand scheme and I want to carry it out. So you get him in here without Aunt Tabitha's knowing anything about it; then you can talk with him for a little while and if you get a chance to make any disparaging remarks—

Hilde. (*in wonder*) What's dem?

Rick. Disparaging remarks? Why (*thoughtfully*) why—it means to—to—hang it! why it means to decry—to—to—say mean things



about to—to (*putting hands in pockets and walking floor*) What the deuce does it mean, Alice?

Alice. It means to speak unkindly of, Hildegarde, to say unjust things about.

Rick. Yes, yes that's it, exactly. I knew it all the time, only I couldn't get hold of it. Well you are to say all the unkind things you can think of concerning my sister. Criticise her disposition; tell what a terrible temper she has; say that she paints, dyes her hair, wears false teeth, lies abed all day when she gets the chance; tell how extravagant she is, say that nobody in the house here pretends to believe anything she says,—say anything; you needn't confine yourself to facts. You have a vivid imagination, Hildegarde; draw upon it to the fullest extent—she'll forgive you—do you understand?

Hilde. Yes, sah,—won't I hab fun! Golly, I wish't he's heah now—I's ready fur him! (*swings duster round her head and dances about room*) Hooray! He, he, he! I 'magine him now gwine outen de do' like he's shot when dis chile gits froo wid him. Hooray! I's in it.

Alice. But, Rick—

Rick. (*eagerly*) Yes, and there's something else you can do, too. If you can get a chance to say a word or two in favor of aunt Tabitha—a hundred or two if you can—do so. (*HILDEGARDE makes up face*) Put them in anywhere, everywhere. Tell him how patient, and self-sacrificing she is—(*HILDEGARDE groans*)—how saving she is—emphasize that fact—what a good cook she is—how handsome she is to those who know her—praise her hair, her eyes, her nose, her complexion—put it on just as thick as you can, Hildegarde. "Everything's fair in love and war," and that will help our cause along wonderfully.

Alice. But Rick, do you think it quite right to—

Rick. Confound it all, there isn't any right about it! This is my affair now; I am your natural protector, now that father's gone, and I don't intend to stand by and let such an outrageous proceeding go on.

Hilde. Yer ken depen' on me, Mars Rick.—Don' yo' worry, Miss Alice. I's fix dat all right. Why de ole curmudgeon! Fo' I'd let him marry you I'd marry him mahse'f fus! Yes I would, de ole fool! Some white folks don' seem ter know nuffin. Why an ole brack niggard know better'n ter arsk Miss Alice ter marry him!

Rick. (*laughing*) I knew you'd help us out, Hildegarde. Now Alice, you see a part of my plan—for the rest we shall have to depend on the inspiration of the moment. (*looking at watch*) I've got to meet Charlie at ten, to arrange about putting off our base ball game till to-morrow, and I may not be back till after din-

ner; but I won't fail you, so spruce up and don't fret. Perhaps you'd better keep aunt Tabitha in as good humor as possible. (*starts for door*)

Alice. (*following him to door*) Now Rick, you won't go off and leave me to aunt Tabitha's tender mercies, will you? Don't go away and forget all about it.

Rick. No, I won't, I'll promise to be back just after dinner. Hildegarde, you be on the watch when I come, to let me know how things stand. Why, I wouldn't miss the fun for anything, —*au revoir!*

[*Exeunt ALICE and RICK.*]

Hilde. (*solemnly, after watching them go out*) Be jess like him ter forget all 'bout it—jess like him. I 'members once as how he got up a s'prise party on Miss Tabitha—when de people come a poring inter de do', wasn't she s'prised? (*holds up hands*) My, an' wasn't she mad! Golly, Mars Rick'd had a s'prise party too, I reck'n, ef he'd been heah, but he wasn't—he forgot ter come home *dat* time! Yes, he didn't come fer two er tree days—den he said he didn't know nuffin' 'bout it, least he didn't 'member nuffin' 'bout it—but dis yer chicken don' b'liebe dat ar. Well, but yer'd orter seen Miss Tabitha! Dey wus a little red spot heah, an' a little red spot dar (*pointing to each cheek*) an' 'twant paint dat time neder, an' her nose—she car'd it higher'n de air'n ebber. (*imitates*) Well, heah I is wastin' de precious golden minutes's if I's de Queen ob Sheba. (*dusts and sings*)

“ Oh, come, come away,  
Frum labor now reposin'  
Let busy Caro, wife of Barrow,  
Come, come away! ”

(*thoughtfully*) I wish't I wus wife o' Barrow. Now I wonder why nobody nebber t'inks ob invitin' me away frum labor. I ain't de kind dat's killed wid wuk, or I'd a been killed long ergo. But de mos' aggerwatin' part ob it is, dat Miss Tabitha says *she* does it all. Now I'd like ter know anybody ken set in de parlor all de time a elevatin' her mind, as she calls it, an' do de wuk in de kitchen, an' chambers, an' take kar ob de garding—an' she a readin' poitry, an' novils, an' sermons, an' dickshunerries all de time? Dat's what I'd like ter know. I sh'd t'ink she mought hab dat dickshunery read froo by dis time. Dickshunerries is de driest kin' ob readin' dat I eber tuk hold ob! Mars Rick gib me a present ob one las' Crismus—I got troo de A's, an gib it up! I tole Mars Rick dat I hope de nex' book he got 'ud be more intrustin', an' Lud-a-mussy, how he larfed. Den he said p'raps de B's 'ud be more intrustin' (*sighs*) but I ain't tried 'em yet. (*AUNT TAB. calls outside, Hildegarde! Hildegarde!*) Does yer heah

dem dulcet tones? I ain't hearin' t'ings jes' now. (*carefully closes door*) Dat means ter split some wood fer de kitchen fiah. I's busy! (*dusts energetically*) Now wot's dem ar wuds wot Mars Rick says 'bout buildin' de fiah? (*scratches head and recites slowly*)—

“ We once hed a gull named Merrier,  
Who t'ought she 'ud build up a fiah ;  
De wood it was green, so she used kerosene ;—  
She's gone—*whar fuel is drier !* ”

Aunt Tab. (*calling louder*) Hildegarde! Hildegarde! (*opens door*) Hildegarde, child, why do you not respond to my declamation?—my—my—exclamation! What are you grinning at child?

Hilde. (*in surprise*) I isn't grinnin', Miss, did yer be callin' me? I's so busy wid dis yer wuk dat I mus' a fergot 'bout ebryt'ing else. (*dusts again energetically*) Eber since yo' gib me dat instruction 'bout lettin' my mind wander 'way frum my wuk, I's been mighty careful (*aside*) when de boss is roun'.

Aunt Tab. (*looking about*) Have you finished this compartment, Hildegarde?

Hilde. Lud a mussy! no, Miss Tabitha, I's—

Aunt Tab. Wall, you need not multiply words, Hildegarde. I wish to hev everything in mortal order to-day, for this afternoon we are to entertain an extinguished visitor, a gentleman who has just returned from a European tower—no less a personage, in fact, than the wealthy Mr. Delano, and I desire that all our de-rangements shall be perfect.

Hilde. (*rolling her eyes in wonder*) Oh, law, yes, Miss.

Aunt Tab. And when the bell vacillates—

Hilde. (*quickly*) Wot's dat, Miss Tabitha?

Aunt Tab. What an inorganic mind you have, child!

Hilde. I s'pecs I has, Miss Tabitha, but dat bell's a vaccinat-in' done beat me.

Aunt Tab. The word I used was vacillate, which means to waver; now, when a bell wavers it rings; therefore when the bell vacillates it—

Hilde. Yes, I got dat—when de bell rings—

Aunt Tab. Precisely—you are to conduct him to this department and inform me immediately.

Hilde. (*slyly making face at AUNT TAB.*) Yes, Miss.

Aunt Tab. And now you may leave this work for a time, as I desire your persistence in the laboratory—

Hilde. (*in surprise*) De libratory! Dat's a new one, dat is; I's nebber heard ob dat 'fore.

Aunt Tab. Why, the culinary department, of course, child; you must certainly try to enlarge your volubility, Hildegrade,—after

which you may do the work in the various domiciles—then return and finish this room. Do you compromise?

Hilde. (*scratching her head thoughtfully*) I t'inks I does, Miss.

Aunt Tab. Very well then, come immediately to the kitchen where I shall have your stipulation ready verbatim.

[Exit AUNT TABITHA.]

Hilde. (*hesitatingly*) N-no wait a minute Miss Tabitha! (*no response*) I don't like to 'xspose my ign'rance on dis yer subjec', but what's dem ar domiciles? Blest if I know. Den what else was it 'bout dat ar volubility? (*holds hands to head and groans*) Dose wuds dose make my brain go roun' awful, (*looks in glass*) an' jess see how tight dey makes my hair curl up! (*to herself in glass*) Olive oil, honey! I's gwine ter hunt up dem domiciles now, my beauty. (*gathers up duster, broom, brushes, etc., etc., singing in a loud voice*)

"I want ter be a nangel, and wid de angels stand;  
A crown upon my fore-head a harp widin my han'."

[Exit, singing.]

## CURTAIN.

## ACT II.

Scene, same as Act I.

Enter HILDEGARDE, followed by TIMOTHY.

Hilde. (*bowing him in, extravagantly*) Right in yere, Mars Delano. (*aside*) Now, how'll I begin dose lies? Dar's Mars Rick ain't done got home yet, I knowed he wouldn't all de time, an' poor Miss Alice a-frettin' herse'f ter def. (*to TIMOTHY, seating him near the piano*) I reckon Miss Tabitha'll be down, sah, soon's she's finished a-puttin' de powdah on her—(*catches herself, with a horrified look. Aside*) Lud a mussy! I mos' spiled it all dat time. (*puts hands to her face as if in great pain*) O-o-o, Mars Delano, I's got de mos' dreffules' jumping toofache dat eber anybody hed in dere life! I's mos' dead. (*pathetically*) Yes, she's a comin' up as soon's she's put de powdah on her cakes for suppah. (*takes hands down and smacks lips*) Mighty good cakes dey is too, sah.

Miss Tabitha's a mighty good cook—a powerful good cook. It 'ud make yer eyes stick out ter see dem cakes—(*aside*) an' mine too!—all covered ober wid powdahed sugar.

Tim. (*nervously, taking pinch of snuff*) Yes, yes, jest so—ha-hacker-chew! hacker-chew!

Hilde. (*jumping*) Ow! how you scairt me, Mars Delano! (*aside, while she bustles about the room*) Golly, I hope he ain't a goin' ter stay ter suppah, 'cause he might 'member 'bout dem cakes and t'ink I tole a lie. (*scratches her head; then to TIMOTHY*) But p'raps she left dem ar cakes ter Miss Alice ter do—den dem cakes is spiled! Miss Alice don' know no mo' 'bout cookin' ner house-keepin' dan a two-yeah-ole baby. But Miss Tabitha 'ud never say nothin' 'bout it, O no! (*aside*) Ef he wa'n't neah sighted, he'd see I's gettin' powerful mixed up on dis lyin' business.

Tim. Ahem! so Miss Tabitha does all the work, hey?

Hilde. (*rolling her eyes and holding up hands*) Poor Miss Tabitha slaves frum mornin' till night—(*aside*) ober dickshunerries! (*to TIMOTHY*) an' she don't get no t'anks fer it neder. Jest t'ink how she brung up dem ar chillun, gibed dem dere edification, an' all dem 'complishments—but lud a mussy! sech carryin's on as dey is heah! Yer wouldn't beliebe it now, would yer, ef I didn't tole yer as is a eye witness? Miss Alice has beaux heah ebery week. (*TIMOTHY lifts hands in horror*) Sollum truf! an' she walks wid 'em, an' she rides wid 'em, an' she torks wid 'em,—an' when Miss Tabitha's gone out ter make a call dey takes up de carpet in de settin'-room, an' she *dances* wid 'em,—an' she a member ob de church, too! Oh, dey's lots ob deceit in dis yer wuld! (*TIMOTHY acts nervously*) Yes, an' dey plays *cyards*, too? Does yo' know what croquet is? No, I t'ought yer didn't; it's an awful wicked game—yer has ter bet money on it, an' she plays dat too! (*stands with arms akimbo*) Golly, ain't she wicked!—But dar's dat angel, Miss Tabitha, (*rolls her eyes and folds hands across breast*) dis yearth ain't good 'nuff fer her—an' sech a nuss as dat woman is! When Mars Rick wus sick, she tended him till it seemed as if she couldn't wait on him no mo', an' he wus sick tree months, too—an' Miss Alice all de time a-playin' on de pianner heah in de parlor. An' Mars Rick said as how Miss Tabitha had saved him tree hundered dollahs by dat sickness, fer she don't beliebe in doctahs an' she tuk cyar ob him all de time herse'f an' didn't charge him one single cent fer it neder. Wot'd yer t'ink ob dat, hey! (*TIMOTHY hitches about uneasily*)

Tim. Miss Tabither seems ter be a proper sort er person. How old er woman do you calc'late she is?

Hilde. Law me, dey's some people wot don't seem ter hab no age, an' she's one ob 'em. Mars Rick says she's 'bout nine—(*starts and puts hands to face*) Oh, dat jumpin' toofache! (*aside*)

I's a great ninny, I is, ter spile de whole t'ing now. (*to TIMOTHY*) Mars Rick says she's 'bout nineteen.

Tim. (*in surprise*) Nineteen!

Hilde. Well, it was sumptin' wid a nine in it, anyhow. I don't member quite; p'raps it was twenty-nine.

Tim. (*craftily*) Miss Tabither has some property, ain't she?

Hilde. I specks she has,—how could she a brung up dem ar chil-lum ef she didn't?

Tim. (*uneasily*) Yes, yes, sure. I—I suppose she owns this 'ere place here?

Hilde. I reck'n yer'd t'ink so ef yo's roun' heah! Lud a mussy, dar's a spec ob dust on de pianner—ef Miss Tabitha should see dat, it 'ud be as much 's my head—Oh, dat jumpin' toofache (*groans. Aside*) It 'ud be 's much 's my head's wuff if Mars Rick heard dat remark. (*to TIMOTHY*) Yes, (*sighing*) it 'ud be 's much 's my head could hold ter un'stan de long dictionery remarks dat Miss Tabitha would converse wid. Did yer eber heah her tork, Mars Delano?—sech langwidge! She's a lady as could sit in any parlor,—Oh, dat toofache! Oh, oh, oh-h-h—but she's too savin' ter do it; (*scratching head, thoughtfully*) It wears out de carpets, she says, an' 'sides, she ain't got no time ter spend dat way—but de way she darns de stockin's (*holds up both hands and rolls her eyes*) is a caution—I mean dat yer couldn't tell dey'd eber been a hole in dem. (*looking round*) Now whar'd I put dat duster? (*goes out to find duster, while TIMOTHY paces the floor*)

Tim. (*soliloquizes*) So the property belongs to Miss Tabither, hey? I allus supposed it belonged to the boy and gall. Lucky I found it out in time now, ain't it? (*putting hands in pockets*) But I allus was lucky. I wish Miss Tabither warn't es hombly es a stump fence, though, I swum; an' the gall's as putty as a picter. (*takes a pinch of snuff*) Wall, yer can't hev everythin'—ha-ha-hackerchew!—at's goin', an' I don't relish takin' a wife without no income ter support her—but this Alice must hev something ter live on. I-I guess I'll pump this colored gall a little before I com-mit myself. (*enter HILDEGARDE*) Ahem, er-er this-this gall-er-er-Alice has some means, I reckon?

Hilde. (R.) Wot's dat?—oh, mean? Yes, meaner'n dirt!

Tim. (L.) No, no, you don't understand; she—she has some—some money, I—I calc'late?

Hilde. Well, if yo's calc'latin' on dat yo's gwine ter git orfully left. Co's I wouldn't tell ebrybody dis, Mars Delano, 'cause it's fambly affairs, but—

Tim. (*eagerly*) Oh,—no, of course not. ( *rubs hands together*)

Hilde. Well, de oder day when Mars Rick arsked her ter lend him twenty-five dollahs, she done tole him dat she hadn't a cent

ter her name ! Den I heard her tell de minister dat she'd giben away her las' dollah fer somfin', I fergot what, an'——

Tim. Yes, yes,—I—I—sometimes do that myself, a—a—a poor man can't be givin' *all* the time, no, no.

Hilde. No, dat's so ; specially ef dey ain't got nuffin ter gib.

Tim. Yes, yes that's so. Now do you calc'late that Miss Alice er—er says these things from—from motives of—of—economy ? Because she don't want ter spend her—her whole income ?

Hilde. Wall I never asked her 'bout dat, Mars Delano, but she's outen de garding, I reck'n, an' if yer want me ter go out an' arsk her now——

Tim. (*nervously*) Oh, no, no, I—I—I—jest asked fer—fer—private reasons, that's all.

Hilde. Yes, I t'ought it wus fer somet'in' ob dat kind. (*aside*) Dis chile ain't ser foolish as she 'pears, no, sah. (*to TIMOTHY*) Now, Mars Delano, ef you'll 'scuse me, I's got ter dust dat ar spec offener de pianner, an' I's 'fraid ob raisin' a dust. If yer'll jes' step in behin' dat ar screen (*precedes him, placing chair*) I'll hab it dusted in a half a jiffy. Miss Tabitha is such a proper house-keeper dat she won't tolerate no dust nohow. (*TIMOTHY seats himself behind screen*)

*Enter RICK, with hat and cane in hand.*

Hilde. (*pretending to dust*) O, Mars Rick, I's afraid yo's done forgot your 'gagement (*imitates in pantomime that TIMOTHY is behind the screen*)

Rick. (*placing hat on piano and cane in corner*) Whew, this is a warm day, Hildegarde. (*wipes face with handkerchief*) Where is Miss Alice ?

Hilde. I reck'n she's outen de garding—de flower garding—I—I mean (*shrugging shoulders and putting hands to mouth*) she's down in de kitchen a-helplin' Miss Tabitha put de powdahed sugar on de cakes for suppah.

Rick. (*in surprise*) Why they never cook this time of day. (*HILDEGARDE points to screen, reminding him of TIMOTHY'S presence*) Oh, I remember now, the range broke down this morning. Yes, yes ; well, I want to have a talk on private family matters with Miss Alice, so you can go and call her. Ah, here she is now. [*HILDEGARDE goes out as ALICE enters.*]

Alice. Oh Rick, I thought you'd never come ; how could you stay away till the very last minute, when you know that I'm so anxious ? (*TIMOTHY puts hands to ear in listening attitude*)

Rick. Well, Alice, don't treat me to another exhibition of your temper as you did this morning. (*ALICE looks surprised*) You see, the boys are going to play with the Beacons, a picked nine,

to-morrow, and we had lots of business to discuss. Nevertheless I've had time to think over what you were telling me this morning, and I think you'd better give up your designs on poor Delano. (*ALICE starts in surprise*) To be sure, you've seen him but half a dozen times or so, but the fellows all say that you can be deucedly interesting and winning when you choose, and it's such a pity that you should use your wiles on that poor old man—the only man that our dear Aunt Tabitha ever loved in all her life. I don't see how you can have the heart to go to work in such a cold-blooded way either, as you spoke of this morning. (*TIMOTHY looks horrified*)

Alice. (*in surprise*) Why, Rick!—What do you mean? I—I (*RICK makes signs that TIMOTHY is behind the screen. ALICE appears to think*) But—but—you know, Rick,—(*goes on more rapidly*) that Mr. Delano is immensely rich—that's the secret of it all—and I should so like to be mistress of Fern Ledge, and wear rich laces, and diamonds, and sealskins; go to the Mountains or to Saratoga, or to Long Branch every year, and take a trip to Europe occasionally—I'd make his money fly! (*TIMOTHY groans*) How I wanted that five hundred dollar sealskin sacque last winter! Do you suppose I'd let such a fine opportunity as this slip by? No, sir. I said then that I'd help that old miser spend his money before the year was out, and I will! I'm so tired of being poor! (*TIMOTHY raises his hands in horror, while ALICE and RICK laugh immoderately in pantomime*)

Rick. I don't believe all that the gossips in town say about him, but suppose he should be as mean as they say he is, what would you do then?

Alice. I haven't any idea that those reports are true either, but then it wouldn't matter much to me, for if he didn't give me everything I asked for, I should run up two or three thousand dollars' worth of bills here and there and everywhere—he can stand it—and then he'd have to pay. (*TIMOTHY takes out bandanna and wipes his face*) That's the way Mrs. Van Brown always does, and she gets ahead of her husband every time. Oh, I'm equal to any such emergency as that. He'll get angry, of course, but you know I can get up a temper too when I try.

Rick. (*with a groan*) Don't remind me of that, Alice; and you don't have to try much either. The Berserker rage is nothing compared with yours. He won't want to see you in temper more than once—why you actually frothed at the mouth yesterday, just because poor dear Aunt Tabitha called you extravagant in your notions, and you are too. (*ALICE shakes a warning finger at him. TIMOTHY groans and buries his face in his hands*) It was such a pity you broke the best looking-glass in the house when you threw the



sugar-bowl at her. (RICK *creeps back of screen and peeps at TIMOTHY*)

Alice. (*aside*) Wait till I get out of this, sir, I'll punish you for that last, you see if I don't.

Rick. (*aside, laughing*) He takes it pretty hard, but he'll get over it. "All's fair in love and war." You're doing nobly, little sister, go on, give him another dose. (*both laugh in pantomime*)

Alice. If he should dare to raise his hand to me, I'd tell every gossip in the village how he abused me; yes I'd call the police, I'd sue him for assault and battery, I'd get a divorce, or, no, I'd make him maintain me—claim a separate maintenance, you know, and compel him to give me three thousand a year. It would be easy enough to prove that he was able to do it. (*both laugh in pantomime*)

Tim. (*aside, walking up and down, behind screen*) Oh, the little vixin! What a narrow escape I've had! How could Miss Tabitha hev stood it fer so many years? If I should ever git married, I'd hev every dollar made over ter my sister the day before. I swum, it ain't safe ter hev money these days. (*sits again, resting head on hands*)

Rick. I say Alice, what about Harry? (*walks floor with hands in pockets*)

Alice. (*in surprise*) Harry?—Har—(RICK *puts up warning finger*) Oh, Harry Blank? Now, Rick, don't begin to tease me about him; how did you find out that I cared any more about him than I do about any one else? You won't ever say anything about him to Aunt Tabitha, will you? She never heard of him—

Rick. (*aside*) Nobody else ever did, either, I reckon, except Delano.

Alice. (*continuing*) And I'm sure I never should want her to; they are so unlike: he is so gay, and she is so—so—good! (*both laugh*) I adore Harry, but (*sighs*)—Mr. Delano is so rich! (TIMOTHY *starts up as if to reveal himself, then shakes his fist at screen and sits again*) Just think, I can have everything, Rick, if I marry him—and I've made up my mind that I'll have him now, if I have to propose myself.

Tim. (*groans; aside*) I'll git eout of this afore you git the chance, young woman. Oh, these females, these females, the handsomer they be the falsar they be. I wish't I's ter hum. I don't believe I keer whether I git a wife er not now; ef house-keepers wasn't ser tarnal expensive I wouldn't er thought of sech a thing.

Rick. Well, sis, I see that it's no use to reason with you; but I must say a word for poor Aunt Tabitha. Don't you think it's

rather hard on her? He's such a fine man and just a suitable age for her—poor, patient auntie. (*both stuff handkerchiefs in their mouths to check their laughter*) Did you notice the tears in her eyes to-day when she was speaking about him, telling what a good man he is and how lonely he must be alone in that great house—or at the mercy of his housekeepers? And I believe she thinks he's coming here to-day to ask *her* to marry him. It's too bad of you, Alice, to stand in the way of two people's happiness! (TIMOTHY *nods approval*)

Alice. Well, I can't help it if she's mistaken, can I? If he's stupid enough to ask me to marry him, I shall say 'Yes,' quickly enough, I assure you. (TIMOTHY *shakes head and fist savagely*)

Rick. (*laughing in pantomime*) And poor Harry! How I pity that poor fellow—he'll be heart-broken!

Alice. Oh, no, he won't. Old Delano probably won't live long, and when he dies and leaves me a rich widow, I'll marry Harry (*aside to RICK*) if I can find him. Kill two birds with one stone, you see. (TIMOTHY *paces floor again, repeating, 'Old Delano! Old Delano! Won't live long, hey?'—aside*)

Rick. Well, Alice, I must say, if you are my sister, that I don't approve of this business at all (*in mock alarm*) Oh, don't throw those scissors at me! Great Scott, Alice, are you crazy! what are you thinking of! Don't!

[*Both run out with handkerchiefs to mouths.*]

Tim. (*springing up nervously, and peeping out into the room*) Where—where's my coat and hat! Where's my coat and hat! (*looks around for them*) What an escape I've had! I wouldn't hev that girl ef she wus wuth her millions! (*brings fist down upon piano*) I wanter go hum! I wonder where Miss Tabither is, and where did that colored gall put my hat and coat? (*paces floor, thoughtfully, with hands behind him*) But I shall hev ter explain that tarnal note ter Miss Tabither, I s'pose. Now what did I say in that note? (*thoughtfully*) Yes, I said I wanted ter see Miss Tabither on important business about takin' a wife ter Fern Ledge. (*mops face with bandanna*) Wall, I did *then*, but I ain't ser pertickler about it as I was. I'm glad I didn't commit myself any further. Hm-m-m, Miss Tabither likes me, does she? I'm the only man she ever loved, hey? Wall, she might do wuss. Of course they wouldn't suspect that it was the young gall I was after. (*sits R. C.*) Now Miss Tabither's a very proper sort of person—not so very handsome, but savin', and a good housekeeper and nuss. Saved the young man three hundred dollars on his doctor's bill, too. Wall, now, Timothy Delano, you *might* do wuss. I ain't ser pertickler about beauty as I was; I guess I'll think it over.

Enter AUNT TABITHA.

Aunt Tab. Law, Mr. Delano, heow *du* you do? (*shakes hands*) I declare, I'm *so* glad to see you! Hildegard has just informed me of your arrival—I hope you ain't been waitin' long. (*surveys him*) Why, how tired you look, Mr. Delano (TIMOTHY *sighs*)—trav'lin' is *sech* hard work, and one feels so drea'fully confiscated after a long journey. (*sits L. C., and fans herself*) Is Europe a large city, Mr. Delano?

Tim. Yes, yes,—an' awful expensive, Miss Tabither, awful expensive! but it hed ter be done—bizness is bizness. (*wipes face with bandanna; then in hoarse whisper*) I cleared a thousand dollars by the trip—yes a thousand dollars!

Aunt Tab. Law, Mr. Delano, you *don't* say so. Wall, bizness is bizness to them as attends to it as you do.

Tim. (*graciously*) Yes, yes, Miss Tabither, I—I—pride myself on attendin' ter my bizness, though I'm a poor man Miss Tabither, an—an—orful poor man. Hev a pep'mint? (*reaches over and passes her one*)

Aunt Tab. (*looking at it gingerly*) How *kind* of you, Mr. Delano. I s'pose you brought this all the way from Europe? Did you go all the way by cars! (*in a stage whisper*) You didn't smuggle this did you?

Tim. (*nervously*) N-n-no, not exactly. I—I—I took 'em fer rent. Candy store, you know—everything moved out but a jar of pep'mints. I—I—I got there just in time ter save the pep'mints! I—I—I like 'em don't you? (*moves nearer*)

Aunt Tab. (*smiles encouragingly*) Yes, I *dotes* on 'em, Mr. Delano. How nice it seems to hev *some one* bring you candy—so romantic. (*sighs and fans herself*) It reminds me of the time Squire Nooman used ter try ter keep company with me. (*rolls her eyes*) How much that poor, dear man used ter think of me, Mr. Delano! (*sighs*) He was so devoted. Why he'd bring a *pound* of candy at a time—a whole pound, and never think of eating any himself.

Tim. Yes, yes,—ahem!—extravagant. (*puts two in his own mouth while AUNT TABITHA nibbles at hers*) I—I—I like 'em.

Aunt Tab. Jest what I said ter him, an' I felt it wouldn't be right ter marry a man with *sech* exorbitant ideas. (*sighs and daintily bites off a piece of her peppermint*) You see we hed a cousin, 'Mandy Riggs, a stayin' at our house an' she was a terrible flighty piece, an' I allus thought she put him up to it. I never *could* bear ter see her doll face arter that summer, never. A fool an' his money soon parts, they say, but I never could bear ter stand by an' see money throwed away.

Tim. (*hitching about nervously*) Perfectly proper, Miss Tabither,

yes, yes—perfectly proper. (*clears his throat with much effort*) I—I—I—, ahem—I—

Aunt Tab. Now I know a splendid subscription for that cold o' yours, Mr. Delano,—a splendid subscription, an' I'll make some of it for you before you go hum. I made oceans of it fer the squire; he liked it an' used ter come fer it every day while 'Mandy was there. But as I was a sayin' to your sister the other day, it seems so strange that you ain't merried an' settled down (*sighs*)—sech a fine—sech a be-u-tiful husband as you'd make (*fans herself while TIMOTHY eats more peppermints*)—but girls are so foolish now-a-days, they hev sech high fluted notions—many on 'em I mean; now our Alice don't—(TIMOTHY *puts up both hands and groans*. AUNT TAB. *aside*) How nervous the poor dear man is. (*aloud*) Yes, the girls let the best men become old bachelors, an' marry some peradventurer they'll hev ter support. It's so different from what it was when I was a gall—I ain't old now by any means, O, no. (*sighs*) I allus did hev a mature look even when I was a baby. But then I know what you're here for (*smiling graciously and tapping him playfully with her fan as she rises*) and I wonder where Alice is. I think she—

Tim. (*extremely agitated*) O—O—d-d-don't call her, Miss Tabither—for heaven's sake—I—I—yes, yes,—I want ter see you. I—I—I—(*rises and paces floor wiping face with bandanna*) I—it's warm to-day.

Aunt Tab. Law, yes, Mr. Delano, my dear, do calm yourself. It's a trying ideal I know; but I wouldn't get so exasperated over it, ef I was you. (*seats herself R. C.*) do set down, and calm yourself.

Tim. It's—it's—an orful hot day, Miss Tabither. (*still pacing floor*) I—I—suppose you—you—enjoy—yes, yes—enjoy er—good health, Miss Tabither?—as—as a rule, that is?

Aunt Tab. O my, yes! I never enjoyed a sick day in my life! (*aside*) Now what's the cretur drivin' at, I'd like ter know?

Tim. I—I—I suppose you know how ter cook—and—and—darn and—and darn—and wash—and knit and—and—and—(*desperately*) so forth? (*sits L. C.*)

Aunt Tab. Yes—the whole category (*aside*) I believe that Sophy Delano lied ter me, and he's goin' ter propose ter me. (*sighs and hitches her chair nearer to TIMOTHY*) How nice it seems ter carry on a conversation with such a supernumerary man as you are—so intellectual! (*sighs, fans herself, and looks down*)

Tim. I—I—I—should think you'd enjoy life, Miss Tabither. You—you—ahem—you seem to hev everything wuth livin' for—a—a—fine farm,—a snug little bit in the bank?

Aunt Tab. Wall, yes, but there's nothin' that makes an effec-

tionate woman like me so happy as ter hev a hum of her own, Mr. Delano; something ter take care of an' keep tidy. Now that Rick's in college, we ain't got no men folks round—except in vacations—an' it's awful lonesome fer me without no man round. (*sighs*) We'd like ter see *you* here oftener, Mr. Delano. (*with affection*) I was thinking of you only yesterday, an' wonderin' ef you'd fergot us *all* tergether, an' this mornin' when I received your little note, I says ter myself, says I, (*rolls her eyes and sighs*) think of angels, an' they flap their wings, sure enough. I shall allus believe in that sayin' now, an' I shall allus think of you whenever I hear it again. (*sighs and tries to look pensive*)

Tim. Yes, yes,—er jes so—jes so. I'm sorry you're lonesome. Er—er—so'm I! Hev a pep'mint, Miss Tabitha? (*passes one*) I—I—I like 'em, don't you? (*moves nearer AUNT TABITHA, putting two in his own mouth*)

Aunt Tab. (*sighing*) Yes, I'm very fond of sweet things, Tim—I mean Mr. Delano,—how heavenly this pep'mint is! (*sighs*)

Tim. Yes,—I—I—you, yes, you spoke of that—that note, you know. I—I—ahem, I called on a little bizness—I—(*fidgets*)

Aunt Tab. (*smiling encouragingly*) Of course! (*aside*) Now he's capixilated with either Alice or me, an' he's got ter propose ter one of us afore he leaves this house.

Tim. (*nervously*) Yes, yes—of—of—*course*; and—and——

Aunt Tab. Oh, certainly, and I——

Tim. Yes, yes,—certainly, and I—I—ahem—I——

Aunt Tab. Jes so—and I and you——

Tim. Yes, yes, yes,—jes so—and—and—and I—and—you—(*takes out bandanna again*)

Aunt Tab. (*aside*) It must be Alice he wants, arter all. (*sighs and looks down; then sadly to TIMOTHY*) There now, I'm afear'd I'm selfish, enjoying your delighted companionship all to myself—and your elevated society—and there's poor Alice——

Tim. (*excitedly*) Oh, d-d-d-don't mind Alice—I—I—ain't per-tickler 'bout seein' her jes now! (*aside, while mopping his face*) I—I—I wish't I's to hum—I—I—swum! (*to AUNT TABITHA*) The—the—fact is Miss Tabitha, I—I—I want to see you about that 'ere note I—I——

Aunt Tab. Oh, law, yes—about the note—then set right down again—about takin' a companion fer life. Yes, I understand! You are tired with livin' in influence all alone by yourself, and out of the malevolence of your inspiring heart you desire ter share it with one who would depreciate your insignificant society and the honor you are deferring.

Tim. (*hitching chair closer*) Yes, yes,—er—er that's it—er—er—I—I think so—yes, yes,—'xactly. Hev er pep'mint? (*aside*)

It takes a powerful sight er pep'mints ter make love ter a woman.

Aunt Tab. (*simpering*) You don't seem comferable in that cheer, Mr. Delano, perhaps you'll find the sofy easier—I'm sure I shall! (*goes to sofa and peeps over her fan at him*)

Tim. Oh, yes,—no,—I—well perhaps it will be. (*sits bashfully beside her*)

Aunt Tab. (*bashfully*) Wall, I declare, ef this don't remind me of the time Squire Nooman proposed ter me. 'Mandy hed gone out in the garding fer something. 'They'd been a-talkin' er long time tergether—I spose he'd been tellin' her he was a-goin' ter arsk me ter be his wife—(*shrugs her shoulders and looks encouragingly at TIMOTHY*) First he put his arm 'round me. (*puts up her fan and giggles*) Now some men makes fools of theirselves when they want to arsk a woman ter marry 'em, but he was jest like you—so graceful. (*sighs. TIMOTHY moves up close to her and awkwardly puts his arm round her waist*) Wall, the Squire put his arm round my waist—a little tighter than that please,—yes, that's right (*sim-pers*)—an' he says, 'Tabitha, I'm a-gwine ter get merried,' an' jest then in comes 'Mandy, an' I wus ser cross at her a-comin' in jest as he was on the pint o' proposin', that I got up an' left the room, an' ef you'll believe it she got him arter all, an' they was merried in jest two weeks from that day. Some pretended ter say that they'd been engaged fer two months, but I knowed better. (*lays her head on his shoulder*) What was you a gwine ter say, Mr. Delano? I didn't mean ter interrogate—I should say interrupt you—I—(*sighs*)

Tim. Wall, the fact is, Miss Tabither,——

Aunt Tab. Don't call me Miss Tabitha, call me Tabitha.

Tim. Wall, the fact is then—Tabither—my housekeeper's gone an' left everything at Fern Ledge all a topsy-turvy, an'—an'—(*AUNT TABITHA straightens up indignantly*)—an' so I've made up my mind ter git merried (*AUNT TABITHA smiles and looks relieved; rests head on his shoulder again*) an'—an'—an'—so I—I—I thought that perhaps er—er—you you'd——

Aunt Tab. (*throwing her arms about his neck, nearly smothering him*) Yes, yes, you dear old Timothy—why didn't you arsk me before?—you angel!

Enter HILDEGARDE.

Hilde. (*holding up her hands in consternation*) Lud-a-mussy! Miss Tabither, has yer got a fit? (*looks from one to the other in comic surprise*)

Aunt Tab. (*bashfully—settling her wig which has been pulled down over her ear*) Hildegarde, my dear, you may go and call

my nephew and niece to congratulate me upon this suspicious occasion.

Hilde. (*starts off, exclaiming*) She's got him, Mars Rick! Dat's all right, now; come 'long 'n gratulate her!

Tim. (*starting up nervously*) I—I—oh, no! d-d-d-don't d-d-don't call nobody! I—I—I—where's my coat and hat? (*looks excitedly round*) I—I—I—

Aunt Tab. (*catching hold of his coat-tail*) Law, Timothy, dear, we've got ter face it, an' we may as well begin now as any time. Sakes alive! I wish there wasn't wuss in the world ter face! Do set down, Timothy, my angel, and when Hildegarde comes she will get your things fer you—but you must stay ter supper, Timothy dear.

Tim. (*pulling away from her and starting for the door—meets ALICE and RICK who are entering*) Oh,—I—I—no, no, I—thank you, but—

Alice. O, Mr. Delano, how delighted I am to see you: so you are going to be our dear Uncle Timothy! We are so glad, Rick and I.

Tim. (*in surprise*) Eh? (*taking proffered hand stiffly, and shaking it awkwardly*) Yes—yes—I—I—suppose so, young woman. (*aside*) Hev they been playin' a joke on me all the time? I—I—I believe they hev. Wall, I must say they was kind er cute about it.

Rick. Come, come, uncle Timothy, we can't think of letting you go before supper; here's my hand; allow me to congratulate you. (*shakes hands*)

Tim. I—I—I kinder thought *you* wus friendly ter me when I sot behind that 'ere screen there, but (*turning to ALICE*) I didn't get no sech impression of *you*.

Alice. Now, uncle Timothy, I'll make you the best of nieces, but—but I—I—I don't want to marry *anybody* yet. Just think how long you and aunt Tabitha have lived single—and you'll forgive Rick and me for having a little fun, won't you?

Rick. Yes uncle Timothy, we didn't mean one word of what we said—it was all a joke.

Enter HILDEGARDE.

Hilde. Yes, dat's so, Mars Delano. He done tole de truff dis time, hones' 'n true. Yo' see Miss— (*RICK scowls and shakes a warning finger at her. Aside*) Dat's all de t'anks I get, I's warrant, ouden dis. Ef I don' git dat ar dress, I'll tell Mars Delano all 'bout it.

Rick. (*aside to HILDEGARDE, laughing*) You shall have your dress, Hildegarde, only don't give us away, that's all.

Tim. (*scratching his head thoughtfully*) I reck'n I ken see through a ladder, er a grin'stun either when there's a hole in it—I—I ain't ser dull as I look. Wall I guess it's all fer the best as it is—ef—ef—ef she *ain't* ser han'some! So we'll shake hands all 'round an' call it quits. (*all laugh except AUNT TABITHA, who looks sternly on*)

Alice. You don't mind the dreadful things we said about you, uncle, do you? We didn't mean to—to—to hurt your feelings.

Tim. Wall, I—I—I don't mind it ser much *now*, but I—I—I minded it consid'able at the time. I—I—I shall look out not ter rile your temper in a hurry. (*tweaking her ear*)

Aunt Tab. (*angrily*) You seem ter ignore the perspective bride. (*ALICE and RICK rush up to her*)

Rick. Allow us both (*putting arm around ALICE's waist*) to congratulate you, aunt, and may your marriage be a speedy and happy one. (*they shake hands and kiss her. HILDEGARDE fans herself with her apron, and sighs*)

Hilde. (*aside*) I isn't in it!

Aunt Tab. Yes, I intend it to be a speedy one, my dears, (*complacently*) and the day is already set! (*TIMOTHY looks surprised*)

Alice. }

Rick. } Already set!!! (*HILDEGARDE imitates. AUNT TABITHA nods*)

Tim. }

Alice. When is the happy event coming off, aunt?

Aunt Tab. To-morrow, my dears!! (*aside*) I don't propose ter let another fish slip inter the water. I hev been long ernough a gettin' a husband, an' now I mean ter keep him.

Alice. } To-morrow!!

Rick. }

Tim. } Ter-morrer!!

Hilde. }

Aunt Tab. Yes, it's all settled. That's a pint that's allus left ter the bride. I don't believe in long engagements, my dears, so I shall not prognostigate—

Alice. Procrastinate, aunt.

Aunt Tab. Then too, Timothy dear, (*HILDEGARDE snickers*) ef we delay the musicals—

Alice. Nuptials, aunt, you mean.

Aunt Tab. Well, dear, it makes no difference—as I was a sayin', ef we delay the nuptials, people will expect a more contagious wedding—

Alice. A more ceremonious wedding, aunt.

Aunt Tab. Well, child, don't interrupt—a more sacriligious wedding then—ef that suits you any better—than ef we were merried on the spur of the moment—and these sac—(*ALICE prompts*)



and these ceremonious weddings is expensive, Timothy, awful expensive! An' the sooner it's over with the better.

Hilde. I's orful sorry ter interrupt yer, Miss Tabitha, but suppah's all ready, (*aside*) all but de powdahed cakes. (to MISS TABITHA) An' de sooner it's ober wid de bettah!! (HILDEGARDE and AUNT TABITHA, R., *hanging to* TIMOTHY'S *arms, while* RICK *stands L. with arm around* ALICE)

CURTAIN.



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
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

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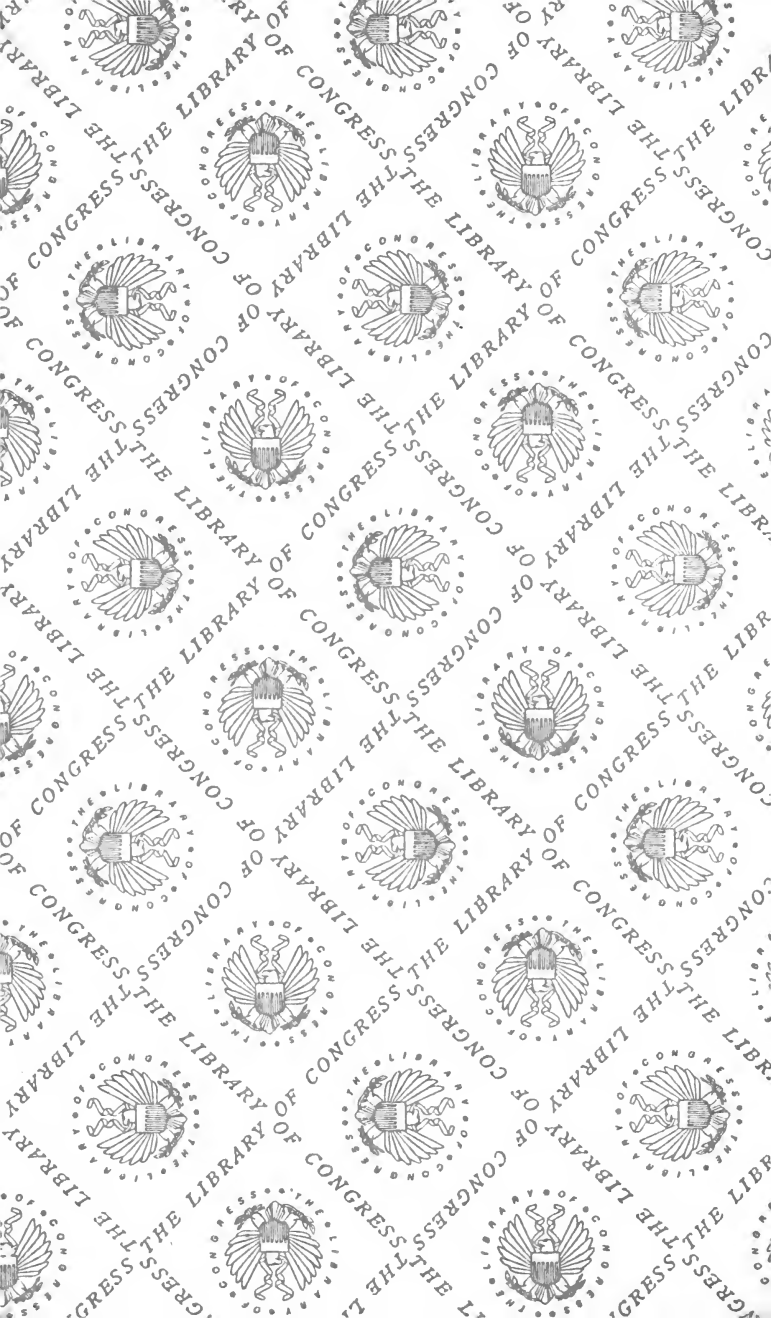
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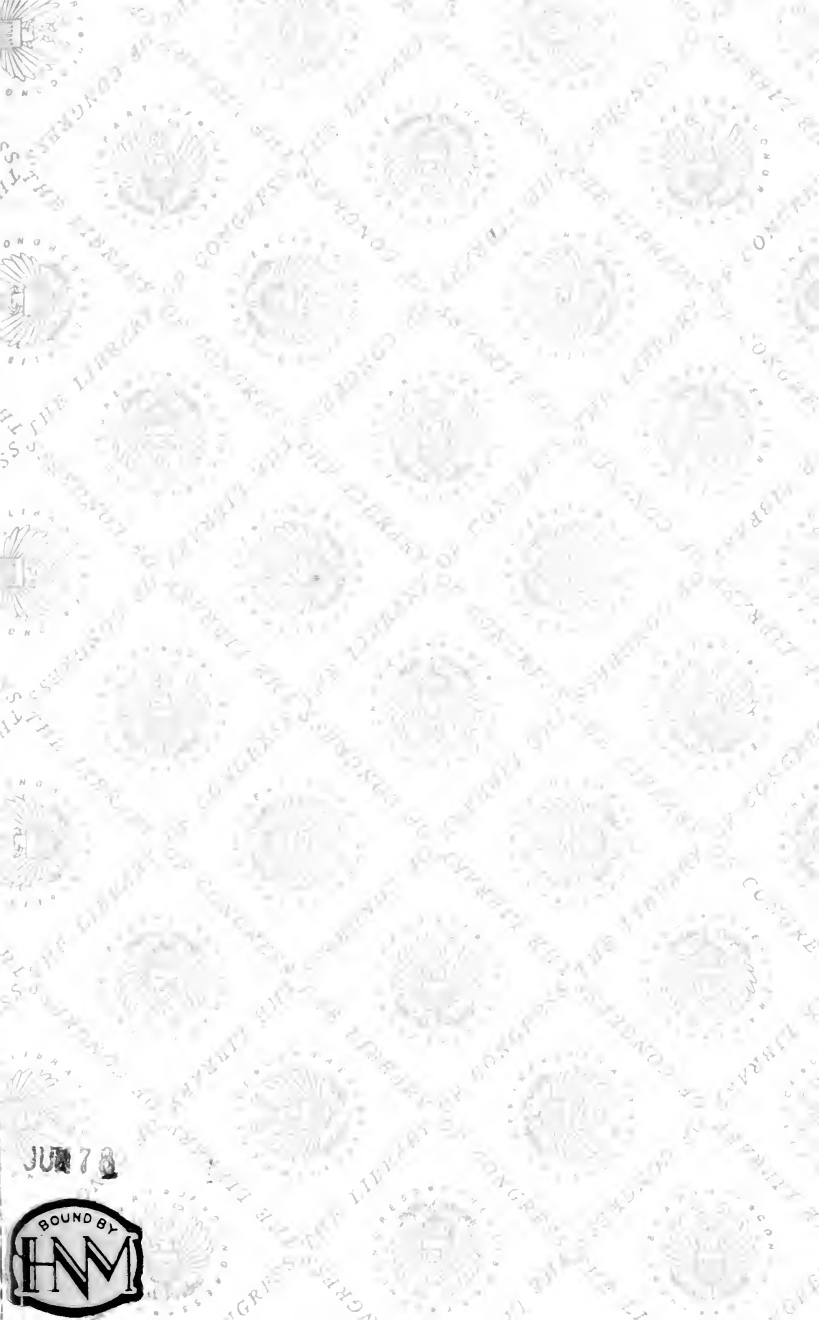












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